

**Testimony Supporting**

**S.B. 887: An Act Concerning the Care4Kids Program**

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Committee on Children

February 21, 2013

Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, and Members of the Committee on Children

We are testifying today on behalf of Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based public education and advocacy organization that works statewide to promote the well-being of Connecticut's children, youth, and families.

**We support SB 887, "An Act Concerning the Care4Kids Program,"** which extends up to 12 weeks the Care4Kids payment eligibility period for women who are temporarily absent from work for maternity leave.

Care4Kids provides subsidies for low- to moderate-income working parents to assist with the cost of child care. This program supports child care for about 7,200 infants and toddlers and 7,500 preschoolers a month,<sup>1</sup> allowing their parents to work or receive job training, and providing a safe, nurturing environment for the young children.

**Providing continued Care4Kids coverage for women on maternity leave helps ensure continuity of care and stability for children, and allows parents to return to work, promoting family economic security.** Under previous policy, when a woman who received Care4Kids took time off due to a pregnancy or after the pregnancy to care for her newborn, she was expected to notify the program of her change in employment status, at which point her subsidy would be suspended until her return to work. The consequences were severe. The child would be pulled out of care for the period of maternity leave, interrupting his routine. The child care center would be forced to scramble to cover the costs of an open slot. Frequently, the child would lose her slot, disrupting the child's life further. And without child care, the mother would be unable return to work.

**We laud the Department of Social Services for voluntarily adopting a new policy last year, under which it provides 6 weeks of Care4Kids payment eligibility for mothers on maternity leave. We support codifying this practice legislatively and expanding it to 12 weeks, as is proposed in SB 887.**

Studies have documented that schedules and routines influence children's emotional, cognitive, and social development, and that predictable and consistent schedules in preschool classrooms help children feel secure and comfortable.<sup>2</sup> Continuity of care is critical for development, particularly in very young children. Children who experience fewer changes in child care providers during their

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<sup>1</sup> The latest enrollment figures, from September 2012, show 7,201 infants and toddlers and 7,462 preschoolers receiving Care4Kids subsidies. See, "Number of Children Paid by Age Category and Service Setting," *Connecticut Department of Social Services* (September 2012), available at: <http://www.ctcare4kids.com/files/2012/12/Sept2012.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Diane Dodge and Toni Bickart, "How Curriculum Frameworks Respond to Developmental Stages: Birth through Age 8," *Clearinghouse on Early Education and Parenting, University of Illinois at Champagne-Urbana*, available at: <http://ceep.crc.uiuc.edu/pubs/katzsym/dodge.pdf>

earliest years experience more outgoing and less aggressive behaviors in preschool and kindergarten.<sup>3</sup> Sustained stable relationships with caregivers allow children to form positive, secure attachments which build the healthy brain architecture that increases the odds of desirable outcomes – including health, academic, and emotional – later in life.<sup>4</sup>

If the legislature is concerned about current recipients of Care4Kids being crowded out by an influx of children with parents on maternity leave, we would also support an amendment to this bill to limit payment eligibility to 6 weeks, in line with current Department practice. We support six weeks as the logical minimum eligibility limit since an infant must be six weeks old before he can be placed in a day care center.

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<sup>3</sup> See, Rachel Schumacher and Elizabeth Hoffmann, "Continuity of Care: Charting Progress for Babies in Child Care Research-Based Rationale," *Center for Law and Social Policy*, (August 2008), available at: <http://www.policyarchive.org/handle/10207/bitstreams/13791.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Rachel Schumacher and Elizabeth Hoffmann, "Continuity of Care: Charting Progress for Babies in Child Care Research-Based Rationale," *Center for Law and Social Policy*, (August 2008), available at: <http://www.policyarchive.org/handle/10207/bitstreams/13791.pdf>